

pride in knowing the First District is home to such a dedicated citizen. On behalf of my constituents, I wish him all the best in his new position and his future endeavors.

# WOMEN'S BUSINESS CENTERS IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2022

SPEECH OF

**HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, April 26, 2022*

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 6441, the Women's Business Centers Improvement Act, to amend the Small Business Act and improve the Women's Business Centers program.

The Women's Business Centers Improvement Act reauthorizes the WBC program for four years, increases the authorization level from \$18 million annually to \$31.5 million, and increases the cap on individual center grants for the first time since the program began.

The bill also establishes an accreditation program run by the Association of Small Business Development Centers to ensure all WBCs provide excellent service and counseling and will increase access to resources and opportunities for female entrepreneurs across the country.

WBCs help women succeed in business by providing training, mentoring, business development, and financing opportunities.

Compared to men, women comprise a smaller percentage of entrepreneurs and start fewer businesses in the United States. Currently, only 24.5 percent of startups in their first two years are owned by women, according to the American Survey of Entrepreneurs.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the changing face of employment has seen a lot of people go into business for themselves. Women are part of the entrepreneurial trend in Houston. Nationally, Houston ranks fourth in the number of women-owned businesses.

In the metro area, more than half (252,000) of businesses are minority-owned and 40 percent (172,000) are women-owned.

Houston is a place where community members take pride in their homes and businesses, and when faced with challenges, like Hurricane Harvey in 2017, they come together in their determination to move forward.

Despite these strengths, disparities prevent minorities and women from fully participating in wealth-building through small business ownership.

These challenges are not unique to Houston: nationally, women and minorities face proportional barriers to starting and sustaining businesses.

Women and minority business owners are not reaching the size of their male and non-minority peers.

The expansion of funding outlined in H.R. 6441 will be pivotal to the success of women-owned businesses as they continue to grow, giving women the resources to reach their full potential.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill because we must support the women entrepreneurs of our great Nation.

# 175TH ANNIVERSARY OF OTTERBEIN UNIVERSITY

**HON. TROY BALDERSON**

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, April 27, 2022*

Mr. BALDERSON. Madam Speaker, this year marks the 175th anniversary of Otterbein University—a regionally accredited private liberal arts university located in Ohio's 12th Congressional District. Founded in 1847 by the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, the university has demonstrated a long-standing commitment to preparing its students for success in their careers and in life. I rise today to commemorate this momentous occasion for Otterbein University and recognize a record of excellence in higher education.

Since its inception, Otterbein University has firmly established itself upon the principles of lifelong learning and opening doors of opportunity for its students. A pioneer in a time of societal inequality, Otterbein was one of the nation's first universities to enroll both women and people of color.

Today, Otterbein University has an enrollment of approximately 2,600 undergraduate students, and 400 graduate students working toward one of its several master's degree programs. Reaching near and far, Otterbein boasts a vast network of over 25,000 alumni scattered all across the world. Otterbein maintains a strong commitment to its core values of opportunity, diversity, equality, and lifelong learning. Reflected in its long list of honors and awards, Otterbein takes great pride in its dedication to community service. In 2015, Otterbein earned the distinguished Carnegie Community Service Classification—a leading national designation for institutional commitment to service.

The future of Otterbein University is bright as it continues to provide opportunities in higher education for generations to come. To this day, Otterbein embodies its core values which have guided the university since the beginning. I am proud to join Otterbein University's faculty, students and staff in celebrating this remarkable milestone. After 175 years in higher education, Otterbein has much to be proud of. Congratulations.

# HONORING GREG LAIS, FOUNDER OF WILDERNESS INQUIRY ON THE OCCASION OF HIS RETIREMENT

**HON. BETTY McCOLLUM**

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, April 27, 2022*

Ms. McCOLLUM. Madam Speaker, I rise to honor Greg Lais, upon his retirement after more than 40 years as the founder and executive director of the nonprofit Wilderness Inquiry. Greg is a visionary leader whose disability advocacy, commitment to equity and enthusiasm for nature has opened a gateway to the outdoors for Minnesotans and people across the country of all backgrounds and abilities.

Shortly after graduating from college in 1978, a lifelong passion for the outdoors led Greg Lais and his fellow graduate Paul

Schurke to start organizing outdoor trips. What seemed like a somewhat ordinary idea became a trailblazing endeavor. Building on the success of a week-long trip to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness with a group of people with a variety of physical abilities, Greg and Paul began "Wilderness Inquiry"—a transformative nonprofit dedicated to providing access to the outdoors through world-class wilderness experiences to anyone, regardless of abilities.

Under Greg's leadership over more than 40 years, the nonprofit has grown to offer a wide variety of trips and experiences, both across the nation and around the world, that welcome people from all walks of life and all abilities. Whether it's a first canoeing trip down a local river, camping in a national park, or exploring the farthest reaches of the world, Wilderness Inquiry empowers everyone to access adventures. Their amazing team of staff and outdoor leaders create trips that are fun, memorable and life-changing for students, families and business teams alike.

Greg knew early on that the strength of Wilderness Inquiry was its valued partnerships with many different organizations. Today, Wilderness Inquiry fulfills their mission to share the outdoors with everyone with the help of more than 100 different entities. Collaboration with U.S. Interior Department agencies like the National Park Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on its CanoeMobile initiative is one of its most successful endeavors. The CanoeMobile "floating classroom" experience works with urban cities and school districts, countless volunteers and other organizations to bring students from all backgrounds out on waterways around the country in beautiful, hand-crafted 24-foot Voyageur canoes to learn about science, history, geography and culture.

Based on his own outdoor experiences, Greg understands how powerful interaction with the natural world is to our health, happiness and desire to protect our natural resources. Through these shared adventures, presumptions are challenged, people grow, and community is strengthened. I can vouch for the fact that these adventures are fun and inspiring. But the best proof is in the smiling faces of the more than 40,000 people that Wilderness Inquiry serves each year.

Even as he approaches retirement, Greg continues to offer his expertise and energy to help nurture the next generation of outdoor leaders. This week, Greg's family, coworkers and many friends will join him to celebrate a remarkable career with Wilderness Inquiry.

Madam Speaker, please join me in rising to pay tribute to the leadership of Greg Lais as he retires from Wilderness Inquiry after more than 40 years, and in honor of his ongoing commitment to conservation, equitable access to the outdoors and vision to create positive change.

# CELEBRATING THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF URSULINE COLLEGE

**HON. MARCY KAPTUR**

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, April 27, 2022*

Ms. KAPTUR. Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak on the 150th anniversary of the oldest women's college in Ohio, Ursuline College. Here is a bit of its outstanding history.